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STATE FOR NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019-02-03
TAGS: PREL MOPS KCRM PHSA IR MU
SUBJECT: (S) Successful Transfer of Iranian Smugglers to Omani
Authorities

REF: a) MUSCAT 79

CLASSIFIED BY: Gary A. Grappo, Ambassador, Department of State, U.S.
Embassy Muscat; REASON: 1.4(A), (B), (D)

¶1. (S/REL USA AND CMFC) On January 29 at 0925 the USS Ramage successfully completed the transfer of seven Iranian smugglers to the Royal Omani Navy (RON) in Omani territorial waters. By request of the RON, the Iranians were transferred via the USS Ramage's RHIB (rigid-hull inflatable boat) to an Omani patrol boat along with 8 kg of hashish. The RON expected to receive all of the drugs but understood when the Commanding Officer of the Ramage informed them that the rest of the hashish had sunk with the dhow. Overall the Iranians were extremely cooperative, with a couple of them expressing thanks to the crew of the Ramage. U.S. Navy personnel noted that the RON was professional and competent, "a pleasure to work with", and that the transfer went off "without a hitch."

¶2. (S/REL USA AND CMFC) The Ambassador personally thanked Oman's Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, Yusef bin Alawi, via phone on January 31 for Oman's assistance in this endeavor, and followed up with a letter to the Minister on February 2. Embassy also delivered a diplomatic note expressing USG appreciation and including incident details and passport information on the Iranians.

¶3. (S/REL USA AND CMFC) On February 2, the Embassy was alerted that media outlets in the region became aware of the U.S. rescue of the Iranian smugglers. The DCM discussed potential press issues with the Omani Foreign Minister's political advisor, Mohammed al-Hassan, who was unconcerned that the incident might be publicized. However, al-Hassan noted that Oman would not make any public statements about the incident and requested that the United States also refrain from public commentary. During the conversation, he clearly communicated that Oman preferred that such transfers do not become "routine." Al-Hassan also confirmed that the seven had been handed over to Iranian custody but did not provide further details.

GRAPPO

To view the entire SMART message, go to URL
http://repository.state.sgov.gov/_layouts/OSS_SearchResults.aspx?k=messageid:cf4dd9cf-9858-4164-b798-8c4349700093